

THE VOICE

A Trusted Voice From The Community's Perspective



WICHITA TEENS CAPTURE STATE PAGEANT TITLES - PAGE 12



Fresh Food, Closer to Home

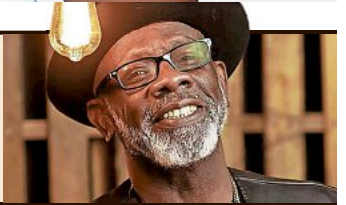
How Wichita is helping neighborhood stores fill the grocery gap.

Page 8-9

Remembering Uncle Jimmy

Beloved Personality Killed in KCK Shooting

Page 5



Volume 33, No. 11 · communityvoiceks.com · Friday, June 12, 2026

PRSRRT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
WICHITA KS
PERMIT NO. 560

Change Service Requested

The Community Voice
P.O. Box 20804
Wichita, KS 67208

THE VOICE

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 11
FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2026

MORE WAYS TO CONNECT

CONTACT US



Stop Looking for a Print Edition of The Community Voice: You can read editions of The Community Voice on our website. Not just current and recent issues. You can read issues dating back several years. Go to www.CommunityVoiceKS.com, click on "e-editions." Plus, our archive is searchable. If there's a particular story you're looking for, just enter a defining word for the story in the search box.

LOOKING FOR OUR CALENDER?
It's Online
↓
THE VOICE CALENDAR
The Link Up
Just click on the toolbar

For the Culture follow
f @ **THE VOICE KC**
Local & National News+ Everything in Between
THE VOICE

WHERE CAN YOU FIND THE VOICE?

ON YOUR PHONE
COMMUNITYVOICEKS.COM



See history of the Juneteenth flag page 10

Why Juneteenth Feels So Good to Me

By **Bonita Gooch**
Voice Editor-in-Chief

Of all the holidays we celebrate, Juneteenth is the most personal to me.

Christmas is important. Easter is important. The Fourth of July has its place in our nation's history. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day reminds us of a giant whose shoulders we still stand on.

But Juneteenth is different. Juneteenth feels like us.

Yes, it is a celebration of freedom. Yes, it honors the day enslaved people in Texas finally learned they were free. But for me, Juneteenth has never been just about what happened in 1865.

It's a celebration about being Black in America and all that means.

Every Black person in

America knows that the struggle didn't end with slavery. We may not face the same challenges our ancestors faced, but we still carry the weight of being Black in America. We still face barriers. We still face stereotypes. We still face obstacles that others don't always see or understand.

That's why Juneteenth matters.

When I attend Juneteenth celebrations across Kansas and the Kansas City metro, I don't just see festivals. I see pride. I see people coming together to celebrate not only where we've come from, but also our accomplishments, our culture and our commitment to keep moving forward -- despite all.

We come together knowing we share more than history.

We share experiences, challenges and a determination to keep moving forward. We wear our Juneteenth shirts. We wave our Juneteenth flags. We gather with family, friends and neighbors. We celebrate our culture, our history and our community.

For a few days, it feels like everybody is family.

Maybe that's why we've turned Juneteenth from a day into a season. As publisher of The Community Voice, I spend weeks helping promote and cover celebrations. No secret here -- I love it. I love seeing parks filled with families. I love seeing children learn the history. I love seeing elders recognized. I love seeing our community celebrate itself.

Because we need that celebration.

The world gives us plenty



of reasons to be discouraged. Juneteenth gives us a reason to be encouraged.

It reminds us where we came from. It reminds us who we are. And it reminds us that despite every challenge, every setback and every attempt to hold us back, we keep moving forward.

And that's worth celebrating.

THE COMMUNITY VOICE
PO Box 20804 | Wichita, KS 67214
316.681.1155 | ISSN 1090-3852
www.communityvoiceks.com

The contents of each issue of The Community Voice are copyrighted. Articles appearing in The Community Voice may not be reproduced without written permission of the Editor. All rights reserved.

ADVERTISING RATES:
Email: Hill@tcvpub.com

EDITORIAL: Readers with story or photo ideas, tips, criticisms or suggestions on coverage are urged to contact the Editor. All submissions to the paper, letters and columns are subject to editing for length, style, taste and legal considerations.

CORRECTIONS: The Community Voice strives for accuracy and fairness. Readers who believe a story or headline is inaccurate or misleading should contact the Editor.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Published BiWeekly
\$35.95/yr. Sedgwick County
\$48.95/yr. Outside Sedgwick County
\$73.99/yr. Outside Kansas

CONTACTS:
Editor-in-Chief/Press Releases
Bonita Gooch
Wichita | press@tcvpub.com
KC | cvoicekc@tcvpub.com

Press Releases: press@tcvpub.com
Advertising: adcopy@tcvpub.com

Contributing Writers:
Tyjuan Davis | Wichita
tdavis@tcvpub.com

Advertising Sales:
Cornell Hill | hill@tcvpub.com

Office Administration:
Elaine Guillory | guillory@tcvpub.com

More Competition Than Usual: Legislative Races to Watch Across Kansas

Contested primaries, open seats and general-election matchups give voters more choices in legislative races from Kansas City to Wichita, Topeka, Olathe and El Dorado.

By Tyjuan Davis & Bonita Gooch
The Community Voice

The deadline to file for the 2026 Kansas election cycle passed June 1, setting the stage for a busy election season across the state.

In Kansas, all 125 seats in the House of Representatives are on the ballot every two years. This year, voters will also elect all statewide constitutional officers, including governor and lieutenant governor, secretary of state, attorney general, state treasurer and insurance commissioner. Kansas' four seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are also on the ballot, along with one of the state's two U.S. Senate seats, currently held by Roger Marshall.

While the Kansas Senate is not normally up for election this year, one Senate seat will appear on the ballot to fill a vacancy.

More on those statewide and federal races later.

For now, several legislative contests have caught our attention because they feature African-American candidates facing competition — something that has been relatively uncommon in Kansas legislative politics. Democrats have often struggled simply to recruit candidates to run in many districts. This year, however, Democrats have candidates filed in 104 of the state's 125 House races, and 17 Democratic primaries will appear on the August ballot.

For African-American lawmakers, competition is even less common. Black Democratic incumbents rarely draw primary challengers and often go years without facing opposition of



Zinzia Armstead



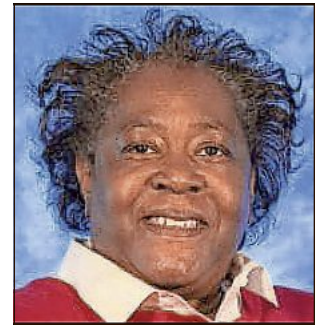
Kamesha Bernard



Carol Brewer



Jalon Britton



Wanda Brownlee Paige



Ford Carr



Bonita Gooch



Romona Smith



Lisa Yeager Walker



Valdenia Winn

any kind. This election cycle, only Lawrence legislators Barbara Ballard, District 44, and Brooklynne Mosley, District 46, advanced without an opponent. In every other race involving African-American candidates The Community Voice identified, voters will have a choice in either August or November.

District 33: Democrats compete for chance to challenge incumbent

In western Wyandotte County, Democratic newcomers Ramona Smith and Emily Banks are competing for the right to challenge Republican incumbent Rep. Carolyn Caiharr in November.

Smith, a Park University graduate, has spent the past 15 years leading healthcare modernization efforts for major organizations including the Veterans Administration, Department of Defense,

Blue Cross Blue Shield, Centene and Providence Health System.

Banks serves on the Bonner Springs City Council and is executive director of the Bonner Springs-Edwardsville Chamber of Commerce.

The winner will face Caiharr, a Realtor who was appointed to complete an unexpired term in the Kansas House in 2025. She also serves as mayor of Edwardsville.

District 55: Incumbent faces Democratic challenger in Topeka

In Topeka's District 55, Democratic Rep. Tobias Schlingensiepen is seeking another term after completing his second two-year term in the Legislature.

Schlingensiepen, a former senior minister at First Congregational Church of Topeka and former treasurer of the Kansas Democratic Party, faces Democratic

newcomer Zinaia Armstead, a licensed social worker and therapist who specializes in trauma, anxiety and depression.

The winner of the primary will take on Republican Lanell Griffith in November.

District 75: Republican primary to replace departing representative

One of the more interesting races in south-central Kansas is taking place in District 75, centered around El Dorado.

Republican Rep. Will Carpenter, who has represented the district since 2019, is not seeking reelection. That has created a Republican primary between Javion Napier and Tyler Coats.

Napier first gained attention in nearby Wichita as a teenager for efforts to feed homeless residents and later for launching an effort to open a restaurant that would employ people experiencing

homelessness. Coats is a conservative Republican seeking to keep the seat in GOP hands.

The primary winner will advance to face Democrat Randy Quinn in November.

District 78: Democratic primary in Olathe-area district

In Johnson County's District 78, Democrat KaMesha Bernard is seeking the opportunity to challenge incumbent Republican Rep. Robin Essex.

Bernard, a community advocate with a background in criminal justice, says she is focused on education, economic opportunity, affordable living and healthcare access.

She faces Democrat Tim Lundberg, a retired air traffic controller and avid bowler.

The winner will move on to challenge Essex, who has represented the district since 2023.

District 84: Familiar names square off in Wichita

One of Wichita's most closely watched Democratic primaries features incumbent Rep. Ford Carr and publisher Bonita Gooch.

Carr has represented the district since 2023 and has never faced opposition in either a primary or general election. Gooch's candidacy marks the first challenge of any kind to his seat.

Gooch, publisher and owner of The Community Voice, says 30 years of working with residents, community organizations and local leaders have given her a unique understanding of the district's needs and the relationships necessary to effectively advocate for the community in Topeka.

No Republican filed in the district, meaning the Democratic primary winner is likely to become the

See **RACES**, Page 11 →

18th & Vine Opens New Pedestrian Corridor Ahead of Juneteenth

The \$5.4 million streetscape project brings new gathering spaces, improved accessibility and additional parking to Kansas City's historic Jazz District.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Just weeks before the three-day Juneteenth Celebration brings thousands to 18th & Vine, last month City officials welcomed people to the district to cut the ribbon on a long-awaited streetscape project designed to make the historic district more welcoming, walkable and

event-friendly.

The ribbon cutting marked the completion of years of planning and construction aimed at transforming the heart of the Jazz District into a destination where visitors are encouraged to slow down, gather and experience the area's rich history.

Former Kansas City Public Works Director Michael Shaw said the

improvements help elevate 18th & Vine into the top tier of historic Black cultural districts nationwide.

"This investment has put us alongside Sweet Auburn in Atlanta and Black Wall Street in Tulsa among the great historic districts in the nation," Shaw said during the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Shaw also noted that more than \$400 million in economic development has occurred in and around the district in recent years, saying the streetscape improvements are part of a broader effort to strengthen 18th & Vine as both a cultural destination and an economic driver for the community.

The improvements received their first major test only days later during the district's Juneteenth parade.

For many attendees, the most noticeable change wasn't what had been added to the district — it was what had been removed.

Gone are the curbs that once separated sidewalks from the street. The new design allows visitors to move easily from one side of 18th Street to the other without stepping up and down, improving accessibility for people using wheelchairs,

walkers and mobility devices, as well as families pushing strollers or pulling wagons.

The redesigned corridor also introduces features intended to encourage people to linger.

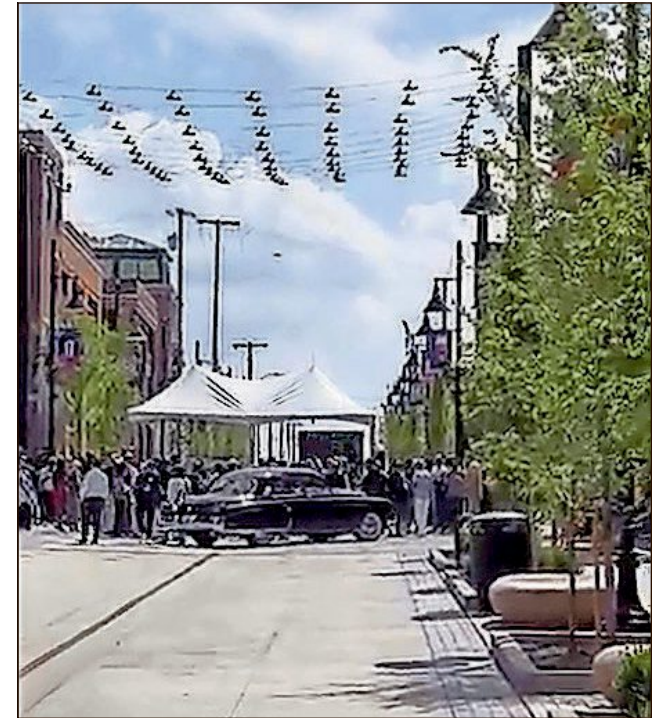
Large decorative boulders placed throughout the streetscape serve as informal seating areas where visitors can stop, rest, people-watch and enjoy events. During the Juneteenth parade, some spectators used the boulders as front-row seats while others gathered along the widened pedestrian areas to watch the festivities.

The project also adds oversized planters and decorative landscaping that soften the streetscape while helping define gathering spaces throughout the district.

Perhaps the most striking visual addition comes after sunset. String lights now stretch across portions of 18th Street between the museums and the historic Gem Theater, creating a festival atmosphere and providing a dramatic focal point for evening events.

The project began as a \$5.4 million effort to reimagine the district's public spaces while preserving its historic character. Funded through a combination of local and federal dollars, the project was designed by Black-owned engineering and planning firm Taliaferro & Browne.

Initial plans called for maintaining vehicle traffic through the corridor while creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment. During construction, however, the project evolved into a more pedestrian-focused



People gather near the American Jazz Museum and Negro Leagues Baseball Museum during the grand opening celebration for the new 18th & Vine pedestrian corridor. Visible in the foreground are many of the streetscape improvements, including decorative lighting, expanded pedestrian space, planters, boulder seating and decorative paving designed to make the historic district more walkable and event-friendly.

design. The street can still accommodate vehicles when needed, but the redesign places a greater emphasis on pedestrians and gathering spaces while eliminating parking along portions of 18th Street.

Parking has long been one of the biggest challenges at 18th & Vine. Even during smaller events, visitors often struggle to find spaces near the district's museums, restaurants and entertainment venues. The issue became even more pressing when the streetscape project eliminated parking along portions of 18th Street to make room for expanded pedestrian areas.

To help offset those lost parking spaces and address the district's longstanding parking shortage, the city constructed and opened

a new parking garage just south of Paseo on 18th Street only weeks before the streetscape project debuted. The four-level garage adds approximately 470 parking spaces, a significant increase in parking capacity for visitors attending events, festivals and daily activities in the district. Signs posted at the facility indicate a \$5 parking fee during events.

During the Juneteenth parade, the new streetscape did exactly what planners hoped it would do: create a place where people could gather, sit, celebrate and experience the neighborhood without feeling dominated by traffic.

For a project built around the idea of creating more street life, that may be the most important measure of success.



We offer support for Dad too.

Finding out your partner is pregnant can be daunting, but we are here to guide you through it.



Choices
Medical Clinic, Inc.®

www.choicesmedicalclinic.org

Family is everything, and so is your home.

Your Home. Your Dream. Your Family.

Commerce Bank is here to help you build the life you imagined. We'll walk you through the homeownership lending process, because we know your family and your home mean everything.



Commerce Bank | Challenge Accepted.®

844.340.2574 | commercebank.com/mortgage

©2026 Commerce Bancshares, Inc. | NMLS# 411948



Kansas City Mourns 'Uncle Jimmy' Dodds After Fatal Shooting; Three Charged

James Dodds, known to sports fans through his longtime friendship and on-air appearances with Jason Whitlock, died Monday after being shot outside his Kansas City, Kansas home.

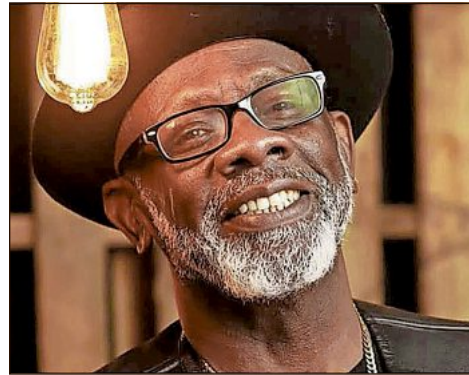
By **Bonita Gooch**
Editor-in-Chief

James "Uncle Jimmy" Dodds, a familiar voice to sports fans and longtime friend of commentator Jason Whitlock, has died after a shooting outside his Kansas City, Kansas home. Three teenagers have been charged with first-degree murder in connection with the case.

According to the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department, officers responded around 7:15 p.m. Sunday, June 7, to the 3000 block of North 82nd Terrace after reports of a shooting. When officers arrived, they found Dodds, 64, outside his residence suffering from a gunshot wound.

Dodds was transported to a local hospital in critical condition. He died from his injuries Monday, June 8.

Known to many as "Uncle Jimmy," Dodds gained a national following through his appearances alongside Whitlock during the commentator's radio career in Kansas City



and later on sports and culture programs, including Fox Sports 1's "Speak for Yourself." More recently, he was a regular presence on Whitlock's Fearless platform, where his candid observations and humor made him a fan favorite.

Friends and supporters described Dodds as a devoted father of five and a beloved personality whose death prompted an outpouring of

tributes on social media.

Police announced that Aaron Johnson, 18, Mark Elliott Nash Jr., 18, and Marquel McGee, 18, all of Kansas City, Kansas, were taken into custody Monday in Newton, Kansas. Wyandotte County prosecutors charged all three Tuesday with first-degree murder.

The suspects are currently being held in the Harvey County Detention Center while awaiting transfer to Wyandotte County.

Investigators have not released details about a possible motive or the circumstances that led to the shooting. The case remains under investigation by the KCKPD Major Case Unit.

Anyone with information about the case is encouraged to contact the Crime Stoppers TIPS Hotline at 816-474-TIPS (8477). Tipsters may remain anonymous and could be eligible for a cash reward.

As with all criminal cases, the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until provable in court.



James "Uncle Jimmy" Dodds, a longtime friend and on-air personality alongside sports commentator Jason Whitlock, died June 8 after being shot outside his Kansas City, Kansas home. Three suspects have been charged with first-degree murder in connection with the case.

What to see some of Uncle Jimmy's work. He has a great compilation video on Youtube: Uncle Jimmy Dodds' Greatest Hits. Check it out here <https://bit.ly/4urGKwE>

There's a lot you can do with a HELOC.

Whether you're planning renovations, consolidating debt, or preparing to make a large purchase, a home equity line of credit offers you convenient access to affordable funds that you can use in a variety of ways.

Visit intrustbank.com/heloc to learn more and apply now.



INTRUST
Bank®

Tradition for TODAY.

BEYOND THE FOOD DESERT:

How Wichita Is Building a Long-Term Solution Through Neighborhood Stores

City-backed initiative helps neighborhood markets expand access to fresh food while building a sustainable model for healthier communities.

By Ty Davis and Bonita Gooch
Community Voice News

For decades, many Wichita corner stores were known as places to grab a soda, a bag of chips or a quick snack on the way home.

Today, some of those same stores are stocking fresh greens, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, apples, meats and other healthy foods as part of a city-backed effort to improve food access in neighborhoods where full-service grocery stores have become increasingly scarce.

Through Wichita's Healthy Corner Store Initiative, neighborhood markets, community organizations and local growers are

working together to make fresh food more available — and more affordable — in areas that have long struggled with limited grocery options.

The initiative represents a shift in thinking. Rather than focusing on attracting another large grocery chain, city leaders are investing in businesses already serving these communities, helping them build the infrastructure, customer base and partnerships needed to offer healthier food choices for the long term.

The effort comes as many older Wichita neighborhoods continue to face challenges accessing fresh food close to home. The issue became even more visible in 2021 when the Save A Lot on Wichita's northeast side closed, leaving many residents with fewer nearby grocery options. For seniors, families without reliable transportation and residents managing chronic health conditions, a simple grocery trip can become a significant burden.

See FOOD DESERT Page 11 →



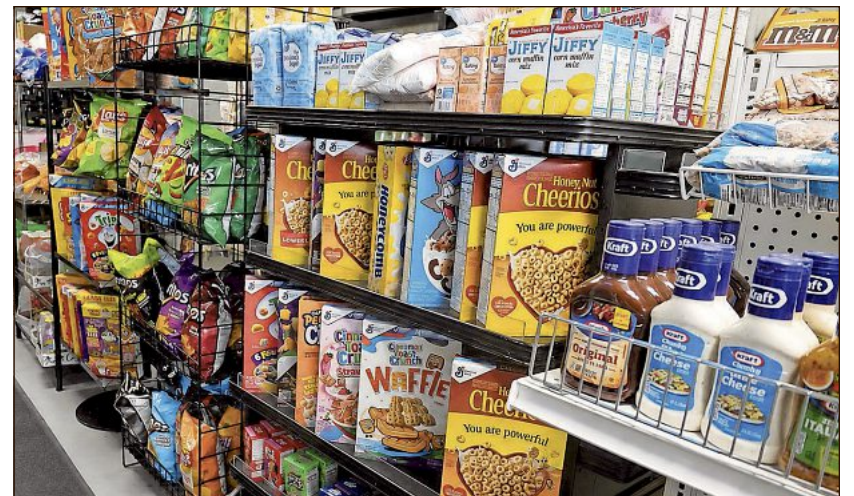
Fresh fruits and vegetables are displayed near the checkout area at Shakey Jakes, one of the participating stores in Wichita's Healthy Corner Store Initiative. The city-funded program, administered by Wichita State University's Community Engagement Institute, helps neighborhood retailers expand access to fresh produce and other healthy food options in underserved communities. PHOTO BY BONITA GOOCH/THE COMMUNITY VOICE

Shakey Jakes: Serving the Village Long Before the Initiative

Long before Wichita launched its Healthy Corner Store Initiative, Shakey Jakes was already working to bring fresh food to northeast Wichita. Owned by Dr. Sandra Watie and her husband, Jake Watie, the store has become a grocery stop, community gathering place and neighborhood resource for residents on Wichita's northeast side. "We've been here since 2014," Watie said. "This is our village, and we have to protect the village." Located at 17th Street and Poplar, the store fills an important gap for residents who have limited access to full-service grocery stores. Customers can purchase fresh and frozen vegetables, meats and grocery staples without traveling across town. "There's really no

grocery stores within eight miles," Watie said. "People either have to spend their money on an Uber or Lyft, catch a bus, or they can walk here and get their meats, vegetables and grocery items." One thing that sets Shakey Jakes apart is its selection of meats. Residents can stop in for frozen chicken for Sunday dinner, a pound of hamburger for a favorite recipe, dinner patties and other staples that make it possible to prepare a meal close to home. Many of the store's customers are seniors, families without reliable transportation and residents managing health conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure. The Healthy Corner Store Initiative has helped introduce new customers to the store through produce

incentives and promotions." The \$5 coupons generated a lot more customers that didn't know we were here," Watie said. Still, Watie believes neighborhood stores need continued support, including improved refrigeration, signage and other infrastructure investments that make it easier to offer fresh foods. Each year, the Waties host community cookouts and outreach events as a way of giving back to the neighborhood they serve. For them, the store is more than a business. "The Lord put us on this corner for a reason," Watie said. As Wichita works to improve food access, Shakey Jakes remains an example of a neighborhood store that was doing the work long before the initiative arrived.



Breakfast cereals, baking mixes, salad dressings and other grocery staples line the shelves at Shakey Jakes. In addition to fresh produce, frozen vegetables and meats, helping fill a grocery gap in the surrounding neighborhood. PHOTO BY BONITA GOOCH/THE COMMUNITY VOICE

Pearson Farms Opens Weekly Market With Fresh Produce From Kansas Growers

For generations, Wichita residents have known Pearson Farms as the place to find fresh greens and seasonal produce.

Now, shoppers can count on regular weekly market hours at the historic farm, where fresh fruits and vegetables from growers across Kansas are available Thursday through Saturday from 4 to 7 p.m. Pearson Farms is located at 2430 E. 33rd St. N., just north of K-96 and west of Hillside.

The new market is operated by the Pearson family nonprofit, Common Ground Producers & Growers.

“We’re just living out our family legacy,” said founder Donna Pearson.

For several years, Common Ground has operated a mobile market program that sells fresh produce at approximately 40 monthly popup markets in 10 cities across four counties in south-central Kansas.

Working with about 45 growers, Common Ground purchases fruits and vegetables harvested throughout Kansas. The selection changes throughout the growing season based on what farmers are harvesting each week.

That means shoppers may find sweet corn, tomatoes and peaches one week and melons, squash or greens the next. Unlike produce that may spend days or weeks in warehouses and trucks, much of the produce sold through Common Ground comes directly from growers while it is at peak freshness.

Keeping prices affordable has helped Common Ground build a loyal customer base across south-central Kansas while supporting local farmers.

“Our customers have to be able to afford it,” Pearson said.

Any produce remaining at the end

of the week is donated to community organizations that help feed families in need.

Participation in Wichita’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative is helping Common Ground establish a more permanent fresh-produce market at the farm. Initiative funds are being used to purchase produce display stands and install an awning that will provide shade for shoppers, workers and produce during the hottest months of the year.

Pearson expects the farm market to open each year in May and operate through the growing season, which typically ends with the first hard frost in November.

The new market gives Wichita residents another opportunity to purchase fresh Kansas-grown produce while supporting local growers and one of the city’s longest-standing farming traditions.



Donna Pearson displays squash recently received from a Kansas grower inside a cooler at Pearson Farms. Common Ground Producers & Growers now offers weekly market hours at the farm as part of Wichita’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative.

PHOTO BY BONITA GOOCH, THE COMMUNITY VOICE

Happy Grocery Brings Farm-Fresh Food and Global Flavors to Northeast Wichita



Maria Shirley, co-owner of Happy Grocery, holds fresh vegetables inside one of the store’s coolers. Shirley and her husband, Forrest, combine farm-grown produce, grocery staples and specialty African food products to serve customers in northeast Wichita. PHOTO BY BONITA GOOCH/ THE COMMUNITY VOICE

When Maria Shirley talks about food, she’s really talking about family.

The co-owner of Happy Grocery, which she operates with her husband, Forrest Shirley, says her dream has always been simple: grow food and put it on people’s tables.

“I love feeding people food,” Shirley said. “I love growing it fresh and putting it on people’s table.”

Located at 2325 E. 17th St. N., Happy Grocery offers fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, bread, milk, frozen meats and pantry staples. Customers can also find specialty products familiar to Wichita’s growing African immigrant community, including cassava flour, plantains, spices and other hard-to-find ingredients.

Many of the vegetables sold at the store come directly from a farm operated by Maria and Forrest Shirley, where they grow

greens, beans, corn and other produce.

“We both love farming,” Shirley said. “That’s why I decided to have this store, so I can always grow food and bring it.”

Shirley hopes participation in Wichita’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative will help expand the store’s produce offerings. She is particularly excited about receiving a refrigerated produce display that will allow fruits and vegetables to be showcased more prominently.

Looking ahead, she hopes to open a restaurant next door where customers can experience African cuisine and learn how many of the store’s specialty ingredients are used.

For Shirley, the mission remains the same whether she’s farming, stocking shelves or serving customers: bringing fresh food and healthy options to the community she now calls home.



Fresh watermelons are available for purchase at Mr. Mc’s Market. PHOTO BY BONITA GOOCH/ THE COMMUNITY VOICE

Mr. MC Helping Build the Network

While many Healthy Corner Store Initiative participants focus on serving their own customers, Mr. Mc’s Market owner Quantin McIntosh has taken on a broader role.

McIntosh helps recruit stores into the initiative and works to solve one of the biggest challenges facing small retailers: buying produce in quantities they can afford.

“Many smaller stores don’t meet the minimum order requirements for produce delivery,” McIntosh said. “They don’t need \$3,000 worth of watermelon — they just need 10.”

See MR. MC’S Page 11 →

Where to Find Fresh Food Near You

These neighborhood stores and markets are participating in Wichita’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative, helping expand access to fresh produce and healthy food options across the city.

Common Grounds

2430 E. 33rd St. N.
Wichita

Merry Tastie Pickles

2251 E. 21st St.

Mr. MCs Market

1901 E. 21st St. N.

Shakey Jake’s

2412 E, 17th St,

Happy Grocery

1343 N. Hillside

Tortilleria Y. Paleteria

Guero
3750 W. Douglas

Cornicerias El Guero No. 1

524 W. Central

Cornicerias El Guero No. 2

4900 E. Lincoln

Cornicerias El Guero No. 3

1560 S. Main

Mercadito Latino America

1660 S. George Washington Blvd.

Safe Streets

1200 E. Waterman

KC Gas & Groceries

1102 W. Maple St. Col Mex Meat Mkt.
2920 W. Central

A map of current locations participating in the Healthy Corner Grocery Initiative can be found at <https://www.wichita.gov/1232/Healthy-Corner-Store-Initiative>

The World Cup Is Coming to Kansas City.

Here's How to Be Part of It.

By **Bonita Gooch**
Voice Editor in Chief

You don't have to buy a World Cup ticket to be part of the excitement when FIFA World Cup 2026 comes to Kansas City this summer.

The tournament officially kicked off June 11 and runs through July 19, bringing thousands of visitors from around the world to one of just 16 host cities selected for the world's largest sporting event.

While many fans will be focused on the matches themselves, Kansas City has been planning for this event for years and the city will have hundreds -- if not thousands -- of ways to join the FIFA fun including watch parties, concerts, festivals and community celebrations designed for residents and visitors who simply want to experience the energy surrounding the tournament.

The Official Fan Festival

The centerpiece of those activities will be the FIFA Fan Festival at the World War I Memorial. Admission is free, but visitors must reserve tickets in advance through the KC2026 website. Fans can reserve multiple tickets for family and friends, although reservations must be made one day at a time.

The festival will feature giant video screens showing World Cup matches, live entertainment, food vendors, cultural activities and special events throughout

the tournament. Organizers expect as many as 25,000 people to attend on some days.

Food will be a major attraction. The Taste of FIFA Fan Festival will showcase Kansas City favorites, including Gates Bar-B-Q and Arthur Bryant's, along with international cuisine, desserts and other local food vendors.

Each week of the festival carries its own theme.

The opening week, June 11-16, is themed "Heartland Hello" and includes a June 12 performance by Tech N9ne along with the opening appearance of Team USA on the giant screens.

The Juneteenth weekend celebration, June 19-21, is themed "Sportstown USA" and includes a June 19 performance by Flo Rida and a June 20 appearance by Afro-Cuban music star CimaFunk.

June 24-27 will feature "The World's Game," highlighting the conclusion of first-round competition.

The July 3-5 weekend is themed "Home Team" and includes Stars and Stripes programming tied to Independence Day celebrations.

The final days, July 9-11, are themed "KC Creates," with another Tech N9ne performance helping close out the festival.

Visitors can attend for free through general admission



Early visitors enjoy opening day at the FIFA Fan Festival at the National WWI Museum and Memorial in Kansas City. The free festival is expected to draw tens of thousands of visitors throughout the World Cup for match viewings, concerts, food and cultural events. Advance registration is required, and fans are encouraged to reserve tickets early through KC2026.com, especially for popular match days and headline performances. (COURTESY PHOTO)

or purchase upgraded experiences, including Premium Garden Passes and Legacy Lounge packages that offer enhanced viewing areas, food and beverage options, and climate-controlled amenities.

Fans interested in attending should sign up early. While admission to the FIFA Fan Festival is free, organizers require advance registration and some dates are expected to be in high demand, particularly on U.S. match days and concert nights.

Beyond the Fan Fest

The official FIFA Fan Festival isn't the only place to enjoy the World Cup atmosphere.

The Power & Light District's KC Live! block will host "Soccer in the City," transforming downtown into one of the metro's largest watch-party destinations.

Sporting Kansas City's Soccer Capital Summer celebrations will bring match screenings and entertainment to Children's Mercy Park, while the Crossroads District is expected to host numerous soccer-themed events, gatherings and viewing parties.

Kickin It in KCK

Kansas City, Kansas, is also inviting residents to "Kick

It in KCK" during the World Cup with a series of free watch parties and cultural celebrations centered around historic Memorial Hall in downtown KCK. Upcoming

watch parties are scheduled June 16, 17, 18, 22, 23 and 24, featuring matches involving countries such as France, Senegal, Argentina, Ghana, England and Mexico. Matches will be shown on giant screens inside the climate-controlled venue, with

food, beverages and pre-game entertainment planned throughout the tournament.

The effort also includes One World Wyandotte street festivals on June 16, 17, 18 and 24 celebrating the cultures that make up Wyandotte County. Festival activities will include live music, food trucks, vendors and a June 18 street soccer tournament on 7th Street in downtown KCK, giving residents another way to experience the international spirit of the World Cup without traveling far from home.

18th & Vine Brings a Different Vibe

At 18th & Vine, organizers are planning the Vine Street FC series, combining watch parties with live jazz, DJs, gospel brunches and neighborhood festivals. While many details are still being finalized, the district's new pedestrian-friendly streetscape

See **WORLD CUP** Page 10 →

Plan Your FIFA Experience

Official FIFA Fan Festival (*Free Registration Required*)

KC2026 FIFA Fan Festival Registration

Reserve free daily admission tickets, view concert schedules, explore food vendors and learn about premium ticket options.

Complete Kansas City FIFA Events Calendar

Visit KC World Cup Events Calendar

Find watch parties, concerts, festivals and World Cup-related events across the metro.

Official Kansas City World Cup Information

KC2026 Host Committee

News, transportation updates, volunteer opportunities and tournament information.

Power & Light District — Soccer in the City

KC Live! District

Downtown watch parties, entertainment and tournament events.

18th & Vine World Cup Activities

Vine Street Brewing

Watch for announcements regarding Vine Street FC events, watch parties, jazz performances and neighborhood celebrations.

Sporting KC Soccer Capital Summer

Sporting Kansas City

Children's Mercy Park watch parties and soccer-themed events throughout the tournament.

Current Landing Watch Parties

Kansas City Current

Riverfront viewing parties and special events around CPKC Stadium.

Kansas City Kicks Off Juneteenth Season

The Kansas City Juneteenth Parade returned to 18th Street on Saturday, June 6, drawing crowds for more than two hours of drill teams, dance groups, car clubs, Greek organizations and community

entries. Spectators also got their first chance to experience the new 18th Street pedestrian improvements, with widened sidewalks and seating areas providing a front-row view of the festivities.

Unlike last year, when rain forced organizers to cancel the parade, this year's event enjoyed pleasant weather and helped launch another busy Juneteenth season in Kansas City's historic 18th & Vine District.



GIVENS
DISASTER RESTORATION
FLOOD FIRE MOLD AIRDUCT

We work with all Insurance Companies

24 HR EMERGENCY SERVICE

316-265-1315
Locally Owned and Operated 50 Years of Experience



WICHITA FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Your first home isn't just a house. It's your beginning.

wichitafcu.com/NextChapter

Follow the Juneteenth Road Trip Online

The Community Voice's Third Annual Juneteenth Road Trip is underway, and Editor-in-Chief Bonita Gooch is traveling across Kansas and the Kansas City metro to experience Juneteenth celebrations, meet readers and share stories from the road.

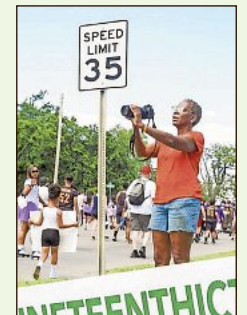
If you see Bonita at an event, be sure to say hello. She'll be taking photos, recording interviews and posting videos throughout the month.

Follow the journey on YouTube at @TheCommunityVoiceKSMO and click on the

Juneteenth Road Trip 2026 playlist. You'll also find photos and videos on our social media channels.

For Kansas City-area coverage, follow **The Voice KC** on Facebook and **@tcv_kc** on Instagram. For our other coverage, follow **The Community Voice** on Facebook TheCommunityVoice and **@community_voice** on Instagram.

We'll share some of our favorite photos in the June 28 print edition, but you'll find much more online.



Hands On. Career Ready.
Classes start August 17.

Start building your future today.

Butler Community College

Still Looking for a Juneteenth Event?

Our 2026 Juneteenth Guide features more than 50 celebrations, festivals, concerts, parades and community events happening across Kansas and the Kansas City metro.

Whether you're looking for something close to home or planning a holiday road trip, there's still time to discover a new celebration and connect with communities across the region.

Scan the QR code to access the guide and find an event near you.



**MBE / WBE
INVITATION TO BID**



JE Dunn Construction Company is bidding Grandview C-4 PKG 06 – High Grove ECC Renovations – and request your bid proposal for applicable material and/or labor.

- 01.74.02 – Final Cleaning
- 02.41.00 – Selective Demolition
- 04.20.00 – Masonry
- 06.00.00 – Rough Carpentry, Finish Carpentry, and Specialties
- 08.10.00 – Doors, Frames, and Hardware
- 08.40.00 – Entrances, Storefronts, Glass and Glazing
- 09.30.00 – Tile and Stonework
- 09.50.00 – Drywall, Framing, and Acoustical Ceilings
- 09.65.00 – Resilient Flooring and Carpet
- 09.67.00 – Fluid Applied Flooring
- 09.90.00 – Painting
- 10.14.00 – Signage
- 22.00.00 – Plumbing
- 26.00.00 – Electrical/Communications/Security Systems/Fire Alarm

**Bids will be received by JE Dunn via BuildingConnected.com until:
June 25 th , 2026 at 2:00 PM.**

JE Dunn invites subcontractors to call if any assistance is required or questions arise concerning work segmentation, work and contract requirements, or the form of proposal requested. Questions should be directed to Emily Allen, Project Manager, at Emily.allen@jedunn.com or 217-550-6157.

EOE, Minority/Female/Disability/Veteran/Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity

THE JUNETEENTH FLAG

Its History and Meaning

The official Juneteenth flag was created in 1997 by activist Ben Haith, founder of the National Juneteenth Celebration Foundation, with assistance from illustrator Lisa Jeanne Graf. Designed as a national symbol for the holiday, the flag was adopted to help unite Juneteenth celebrations across the country.

The original design debuted in 1997, and the date “June 19, 1865” was added in 2000. The flag’s white star represents Texas, where Juneteenth began, and the freedom of African Americans throughout the nation. The burst surrounding the star symbolizes a new beginning and the spread of

freedom. The curved horizon line represents hope and future opportunities. Its red, white and blue colors intentionally mirror the American flag, emphasizing that the story of Black freedom is an American story and that formerly enslaved people and their descendants are an integral part of the nation.

WORLD CUP, from Page 8 ↓

and growing entertainment scene could make it one of the most unique World Cup gathering places in the city. With Juneteenth celebrations occurring during the tournament, the historic district is expected to draw both local residents and international visitors seeking Kansas City’s Black cultural experience.

Something for Everyone

Other fan destinations include Current Landing along the riverfront, Memorial Hall in Kansas City, Kansas, Lenexa City Center, Downtown Overland Park, Grandview Amphitheater, Johnson County’s Theatre in the Park, Café Corazón in the Crossroads and community watch parties throughout the Northland.

For those who don’t know a corner kick from a penalty kick, that may not matter.

For one month this summer Kansas City will become an international gathering place filled with visitors, music, food, festivals and celebrations. Whether you watch a match or not, FIFA’s arrival promises to be one of the biggest community events the region has ever hosted.



MAY 21-JULY 30
**UNEARTH
A STORY™**
Summer Reading at Your Library

**TRACK YOUR SUMMER READING TO WIN FREE PRIZES!
AND JOIN US FOR FREE CONCERTS, EVENTS, &
ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES ALL SUMMER LONG!**



Wichita Public Library
→ wichitalibrary.org/summerreading




Home at Last

A Home-At-Last loan from Capitol Federal® offers qualified buyers:

- No minimum loan amounts
- No up-front mortgage insurance premium
- Homebuyers education by recognized community organizations
- Low down payments & competitive rates
- Local service for the life of the loan

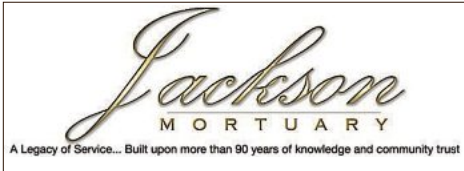


View CapFed's loan options and apply today.

Or find the right loan for your needs with a Purchase + Improvement loan or Home Equity Line of Credit from CapFed®.

888.8CAPFED | capfed.com





Sherry Yvonne Howard, 68

November 21, 1957 – June 7, 2026
 Memorial Service will be held at 11 am on Fri., June 26 at Jackson Mortuary, 1125 E 13th.

Dennis Earl Mitchell, 66

December 25, 1959 – June 7, 2026
 Service was held June 15 at Jackson Mortuary.

Bobby Dean Justice, Jr., 61

December 24, 1964 – May 31, 2026
 Memorial Service was held June 6 at Paradise Missionary Baptist

Cleophus "Cleo" Littleton, 93

December 31, 1932 – May 31, 2026
 Service was held June 15 at University

United Methodist Church.

Teayanise "Teaya" Guiden, 52

March 2, 1974 – May 30, 2026
 Memorial Service will be held at 4pm on Sat., June 27 at The Heights Center, 3315 E. 25th St. N,

Takya Keasia Couch, 25

April 18, 2001 – May 28, 2026
 Service was held June 9 at Jackson Mortuary

Willie Charles Taylor, 78

February 6, 1948 – May 28, 2026
 Service will be held in Bryan, Texas.

Teddy D. Mack, 70

October 31, 1955 – May 23, 2026
 Service was held June 5 at Greater New Testament Baptist Church.

Vincent Traylor, 70

July 7, 1955 – May 19, 2026
 Service will be held at 3 pm on Thur., June 25 at Jackson Mortuary, 1125 E 13th.

MR. MC'S, from Page 7 ↓

By helping stores coordinate purchases and share resources, McIntosh is helping build a network that makes fresh produce more accessible for neighborhood markets.

The market, located in the former P&P Seed and Bait building at 21st Street and Interstate 135, sells fresh produce and other grocery items while serving as a resource for both customers and fellow store owners participating in the initiative.

McIntosh's vision extends beyond selling produce. Through produce stands and other community-based efforts, he hopes to create opportunities for people who often struggle to find employment while expanding access to healthy foods in Wichita neighborhoods.

For McIntosh, improving food access is not just about one store. It's about helping neighborhood businesses work together while creating healthier communities and new opportunities for the people who live in them.

FOOD DESERT, from Page 6 ↓

In November 2024, the City of Wichita approved approximately \$950,400 in American Rescue Plan Act funding for the Healthy Corner Store Initiative. The program is administered by Wichita State University's Community Engagement Institute and works with neighborhood stores to expand access to fresh produce, healthier grocery items and nutrition education.

Joanna Sabally, who helps coordinate the initiative through Wichita State University, said the focus is on strengthening smaller neighborhood businesses that already have roots in the communities they serve.

"Those smaller businesses are often more invested in the

neighborhood," Sabally said. "We're focused on who's already there selling food and how we support them in offering healthier options."

Today, the initiative includes about 14 participating locations across Wichita, with additional stores in the onboarding process. Wichita State reports the program helped support more than \$29,000 in produce distribution through participating stores between May and August 2025, in addition to produce distributed through community market programs.

The initiative also uses produce incentives and other promotional efforts designed to encourage residents to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from neighborhood stores. Store owners say the

incentives have helped introduce new customers to businesses they may not have previously visited.

"The \$5 coupons generated a lot more customers that didn't know we were here," said Dr. Sandra Watie, co-owner of Shakey Jakes near 17th Street and Poplar.

For organizers and store owners alike, the goal is bigger than a single produce purchase. The hope is that residents who discover fresh food options close to home will continue returning long after the incentives are gone.

At Shakey Jakes, that work began long before the Healthy Corner Store Initiative existed.

Watie and her husband, Jake Watie, have operated the neighborhood store since 2014. Over the years, they have expanded their offerings to include fresh

and frozen produce, meats and grocery staples while serving a neighborhood where many residents lack easy access to a supermarket.

"We've been here since 2014," Watie said. "This is our village, and we have to protect the village."

A few miles away, Mr. Mc's Market is tackling the issue from a different direction. The store occupies the former P&P Seed and Bait location, a longtime neighborhood landmark.

Owner Quantin McIntosh has become one of the initiative's strongest advocates, helping recruit additional stores and working to solve one of the biggest challenges facing neighborhood retailers: access to affordable produce distribution.

RACES, from Page 3 ↓

district's next representative.

District 89: Open seat creates opportunity

District 89 became open

when Rep. KC Ohaebosim decided not to seek reelection and instead joined the gubernatorial ticket headed by Sen. Cindy Holscher as her lieutenant governor running mate.

Two Democratic

candidates have stepped up hoping to win the seat. The primary pits Carol Brewer against Jalon Britton, both of whom have run unsuccessfully for legislative office before.

Brewer, daughter of former Wichita Mayor Carl Brewer, operates Dorothy's Lane, a nonprofit that assists families facing a range of challenges. She previously ran for a southeast Wichita legislative seat.

Britton, a Wichita State University graduate who has worked in education, youth development

and family services, previously challenged Republican Rep. Patrick Penn in east Wichita's District 98.

No Republican filed in District 89, making the Democratic primary especially significant.

Incumbents face Republican challengers in Kansas City

Not every race involves a primary.

In Kansas City, Rep. Valdenia Winn, who has represented District 34 since 2001, will face Republican CeCe Harlin in the general election. Harlin ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Kansas City, Kansas, in 2025.

Rep. Wanda Brownlee Paige, who is completing her first term representing District 35, faces Republican challengers Alex Sanchez and Lisa Walker-Yeager. Both Sanchez and Walker-Yeager have run unsuccessfully for office before.

Both Winn and Brownlee Paige also serve on the Kansas City, Kansas, Board of Education.

Whether the contests are primaries, general elections or open-seat races, voters in many traditionally uncontested districts will have more choices than they have become accustomed to seeing.

Clean Gutterman
 Rain Gutter Cleaning
 265-4048
 "You stay OUT of the gutter!"
 Free Estimates
 www.cleangutterman.com

Join us each Sunday in person @ 10 am & 5 pm for our Worship Services or online @ 10am @

Chisholm Trail Church of Christ
 5833 E. 37th St. Wichita, KS 67220
 www.chisholmtrailcofc.org/live
 Bible Classes for all ages on Wednesdays @ 7 pm
 316-683-1313
 Barry L. Gainey, Minister

Two Crowns, One City

Wichita Teens Earn State Pageant Titles in Historic Weekend

Ta'Lyiah Lewis and Dia Kearney will represent Kansas in two different national pageant systems after winning state crowns on consecutive days.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

In a remarkable weekend for Wichita, two African-American teens captured state pageant titles in separate national pageant systems and will now represent Kansas on the national stage.

On Saturday, Wichita Northwest High School student Ta'Lyiah Lewis was crowned Miss Kansas' Teen through the Miss America Organization during competition in Pratt. The next day, Wichita Heights High School graduate and class valedictorian Dia Kearney was crowned Miss Kansas Teen USA in Wichita.

While the titles sound similar, the two young women are competing in two separate national contest organizations with distinct missions and competition formats.

The Miss America Organization emphasizes scholarships, talent, leadership and community service. Contestants compete in private interviews, fitness and evening wear competitions and perform a talent presentation.

The Miss USA Organization focuses on interviews, evening gown and activewear competitions and does not include a talent competition.

Together, the victories mark a rare achievement for Wichita and provide a powerful reminder of the talent, leadership and promise found in the city's young Black women.

For Lewis, the journey to the crown has been built on personal growth, service and advocacy.

The daughter of Chandra Lewis and Adrian McClough, Lewis first stepped onto

the pageant stage as a contestant in the Miss Juneteenth ICT Pageant in 2024. At the time, she said she hoped to build confidence, develop leadership skills and earn scholarship opportunities for college.

Since then, she has continued to grow as a student, athlete and community leader.

Lewis captured the Miss Kansas' Teen title after competing against 20 contestants from across the state. She advances to Miss America's Teen 2027 which will be held in August in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Her community service initiative focuses on youth mental health awareness and suicide prevention. During the state competition, Lewis performed a praise dance for the talent portion, using faith-inspired movement to share her message with judges and audiences.

The next day, Kearney added another crown to Wichita's remarkable weekend.

The 18-year-old daughter of Caress and Steve Kearney graduated this spring as valedictorian of Wichita Heights High School. Unlike many pageant contestants who spend years competing, Kearney won her state title in only her second pageant.

Her pageant journey began when local pageant director Denise Colborn spotted a photo of her on social

media and encouraged her to compete in the Miss ICT Teen pageant. Kearney entered and won, earning a spot at Miss Kansas Teen USA.

She won that title as well. Two pageants. Two crowns.

According to her family, pageantry has helped Kearney gain confidence, develop lasting friendships and discover a powerful voice she did not know she possessed.

As Miss Kansas Teen USA, Kearney plans to

promote her platform, Healing Through Hospitality, which encourages kindness, inclusion and community connection. She hopes to inspire others to recognize the healing power of welcoming and supporting those around them.

In August, Kearney will represent Kansas before national audiences in the Miss Teen USA pageant in Miami.

For Wichita's Black community, their victories are about more than crowns and titles. They reflect academic excellence, leadership, service, faith, determination and the willingness to step onto a stage and pursue opportunities that can open doors for the future.

In a city that has long celebrated the achievements of its young people, Lewis and Kearney have given Wichita another reason to cheer — and two more role models for the next generation to follow.

Ta'Lyiah Lewis crowned Miss Kansas' Teen.



Dia Kearney crowned Miss Kansas Teen USA.